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2010 JAN -5 PM 2:18

Cathy Noh

From: Cathy Noh [cathy.noh@saylorcompany.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 05, 2010 9:51 AM
Subject: Issues Points Memo: Interview with Murat Dzhioev, Minister of Foreign Affairs, The Republic of South Ossetia
Attachments: Issues Points Memo Interview with South Ossetian MFA.pdf
Importance: High

Please consider the attached interview with South Ossetia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Murat Dzhioev. We have included some highlights from the interview below. If you need further information about South Ossetia, please www.republicofsouthossetia.com.

Happy New Year.

Steve

On the situation in the Caucasus:

"...Georgian leadership refuses to sign a non-use-of-force agreement with South Ossetia, which had been brought up on many occasions by the leadership of South Ossetia both before and after August. Georgia continues to be the cause of tension in the Caucasus..."

What would you tell Secretary Clinton if you had an hour with her:

"...I would ask her to evaluate the U.S. support for President Saakashvili as honestly and objectively as she can in light of the EU report and recent statements from him such as he does not 'plan to use US weapons for a parade'..."

On the political and economic embargo placed on South Ossetia by Georgia:

"...I hope that President Obama and others in Europe and elsewhere recognize that isolating South Ossetia while re-arming Georgia is a dangerous recipe that feeds President Saakashvili's megalomania and encourages his bravado..."

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PUBLIC RELATIONS COUNSEL

From: Steve Ellis
Subject: Issues Points Memo Interview
Date: January 5, 2009

Please consider the following interview with South Ossetia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Murat Kuzmuth Dzhioev in your coverage. If you have questions or need further information, please contact me at +1 202.715-1448 or at steven.ellis@saylorcompany.com. For further information on South Ossetia, please visit www.republicofsouthossetia.org.

IP: How would you assess the current political and security environment in the Caucasus? Has the situation improved or deteriorated since the August 2008 war?

Dzhioev: The situation in the Caucasus remains quite tense. I would call it stably tense. Of course it differs from the situation before August 2008. The Republic of South Ossetia withstood then a brutal attack by Georgian forces and received international recognition. Currently it is recognized by five states. At the same time, the leadership of Georgia, having lost the August 2008 military aggression against the Republic of South Ossetia has not renounced its plans and aggressive rhetoric about re-taking South Ossetia. Georgia continues to arm and again, just as before the August 2008 war, many western countries keep helping her. Georgian leadership refuses to sign a non-use-of-force agreement with South Ossetia, which had been brought up on many occasions by the leadership of South Ossetia both before and after August. Georgia continues to be the cause of tension in the Caucasus.

IP: Do you expect other nations to recognize South Ossetia?

Dzhioev: Of course. We are working with many countries around the world on this issue. We will be grateful to any state which decides to recognize the Republic of South Ossetia

IP: Are you in touch with your counterparts in those countries that have recognized South Ossetia—Abkhazia, Russia, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru? If so, what opportunities do you see for closer relations with those countries?

Dzhioev: We have established a continuous interaction with the Russian Federation with full diplomatic relations, including embassies and an agreement of friendship and cooperation in all spheres. We are also undertaking measures to expand bilateral, mutually beneficial relations with other states which have recognized our Republic.

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- IP:** What are your impressions of the EU report on the 2008 war?
- Dzhioev:** In the report of the independent commission of the EC, it clearly indicates that Georgia started the war with its aggression against South Ossetia. By doing this Georgia has violated the international law. And that, to my opinion, is an important conclusion of the report. The report also identifies the countries which supplied Georgia with offensive arms and contributed to its aggression. The report sought a balanced distribution of responsibility among Georgia and South Ossetia and even Russia. But this was done because of political biases and was based on insufficient analysis of the evidence, which the commission had available.
- IP:** Do you detect any difference in the international community's attitudes towards South Ossetia since the report was issued?
- Dzhioev:** When the report was first issued, we felt that Western leaders were trying to downplay the report and its main conclusions as little as possible. It is obvious that the conclusions of the report did not coincide with the expectations of those who practiced a policy of double standards. Nevertheless, as more leaders consider the underlying points of the report—mainly that Georgian President Saakashvili acted irresponsibly—we are hopeful that attitudes will begin to change.
- IP:** What are your most important foreign policy priorities?
- Dzhioev:** Provision of external conditions for securing the safety of the people of South Ossetia; work on further recognition of RSO as an equal member of international community, creation of a positive and attractive international image of South Ossetia.
- IP:** What is the most common misperception foreigners have about South Ossetia?
- Dzhioev:** The fact that South Ossetia continues to be considered part of Georgia. We are not, and we will not ever be again. We want to be independent—just as Georgia wanted to be independent from the Soviet Union and the United States from England.
- IP:** If you had an hour with U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, what would you talk to her about, and what is the most important message you would ask her to take back to President Obama?
- Dzhioev:** First, I would ask Secretary of State Clinton to understand and accept the truth about events in this region—that U.S. programs designed to train and equip Georgia resulted in a brutal attack on civilians, which virtually destroyed South Ossetia.

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Next, I would ask her to talk not just to me, but to the citizens of South Ossetia so she could hear in their words why they want to be an independent nation, free of Georgian oppression. I would also ask her to refrain from making decisions about our future without any input from us. Finally, and maybe most importantly, I would ask her to evaluate the U.S. support for President Saakashvili as honestly and objectively as she can in light of the EU report and recent statements from him such as he does not "plan to use US weapons for a parade."

- IP:** Is there any progress in convincing Georgia to consider a non-violence pact with South Ossetia?
- Dzhioev:** The leadership of Georgia is not ready for such a step. The representatives of South Ossetia are trying to convince the participants of Geneva talks in the necessity of such a binding document, the signing of which would be an important step towards establishment of a security system in the region. However, President Saakashvili and those surrounding him, to the contrary, continue to increase the Georgia's military force with American and western support. As long as Saakashvili knows he can get the arms he wants by simply asking, he has no incentive to manage the situation otherwise.
- IP:** South Ossetia has been accused of preventing Georgian refugees from returning to their homes and failing to protect those who do return from harassment or violence. Please respond to those accusations.
- Dzhioev:** The leadership of South Ossetia has always observed and will continue to observe international law, including refugee issues. South Ossetia's position is and always will be to solve the problems of all persons, irrespective of their nationality, who became refugees and IDPs as a result of Georgian-Ossetian conflicts since 1989. The leadership of Georgia and its supporters only speak about ethnic Georgians. They refuse to face the problem of the more than 100,000 Ossetians who were forced to flee Georgia and South Ossetia in 1989-1992 as a result of Georgian aggression and ethnic cleansing. All the returnees should be provided safety for their lives. We cannot guarantee such safety until the Georgian leadership agrees to a non-violent pact with us. That is the reality of the situation.
- IP:** Georgia has waged a diplomatic and economic embargo on South Ossetia, aided by the United States and its European allies. What impact has that had on South Ossetia's abilities to rebuild its war-damaged economy and provide for its people?
- Dzhioev:** It is only from Russia that South Ossetia receives assistance in rehabilitation of our economy and infrastructure, destroyed as a result of Georgian aggression.

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Other countries and international organizations have rendered practically no assistance to the people (I underline, the people). Their talks about humanitarian issues go no further than their political interests. With that unfortunate mentality, it is hypocritical for those same countries to claim that Russian influence in South Ossetia is too great. I hope that President Obama and others in Europe and elsewhere recognize that isolating South Ossetia while re-arming Georgia is a dangerous recipe that feeds President Saakashvili's megalomania and encourages his bravado. There has to be a better way out of this situation. If the United States and others would temper their almost blind support for President Saakashvili, the chances of progress in this region could increase dramatically.

IP: Thank you, Minister Dzhioev.

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